

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission  
Special Meeting  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game  
Magic Valley Regional Office  
319 South 417 East  
Jerome, Idaho**

**May 21**

Commissioners toured the Murphy Complex Fire and the Salmon Falls Reservoir Fisheries.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. to hold an executive session. Commissioners Tony McDermott, Fred Trevey, Bob Barowsky, Wayne Wright, Randy Budge and Gary Power were present.

**08 -41 Commissioner Trevey moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345 (1) (F) TO DISCUSS LEGAL matters. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

The executive session ended at 7:10 p.m. with no official action taken.

**RULES**

**Public Meeting**

Chairman Wheeler noted that the Commission takes the public comment seriously and the Commission will review the comments at the general meeting on May 22. Chairman Wheeler introduced Representative Bert Stevenson.

The following individuals testified at the public meeting regarding wolves, management of wolves, wolf viewing areas, and how the wolf population is affecting the big game herds: Travis Bullock, John Faulkner, Ben Rust, Asa Currier, Doug Palmer, Scott Farr, Ron Gillett, Bill Ward, Bryd Golay, John Delorenzo, Lance, Dan Deagle, Damon Rush, Joe Lyman, Reed Tucker, Tony Mayer, Alison Steen, Mike Shetzoz, Rex Rammell, Jonathan Matthews, Jack Oyler, Larry Thorngren, Marv Hoyt, Nate Helm, Brad Thomas, John Robison, Vern R. Thomas, Stephen Robert Andersen, Carl Nellis, Harry Wilcox, and Rocky Lambers.

The following individuals submitted written comment but did not testify: Glenn Ramsey, James Seibel, Alfred Kyle, Tom Schiermeier, Steve Sabotka, and Rex Williams.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

## **May 22**

Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. with Commissioners Tony McDermott, Fred Trevey, Bob Barowsky, Wayne Wright, Randy Budge and Gary Power present.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Agenda Changes**

A report by the Department of Corrections was added to the agenda.

### **Review of Public Comment**

Commissioners reviewed and discussed the public meeting comments. Chairman Wheeler noted that most comments received were regarding wolves. Director Groen stated that 31 people testified and out of those comments everyone supported some type of wolf management and some type of season. Over half of the constituents are concerned about the status of the elk populations and 3-4 looking at non consumptive viewing use. Director Groen noted that written comment was received from 6 individuals and the comments were consistent with prior wolf testimony and opposing wolf viewing areas. Other topics discussed deductible for depredation accounts; steelhead fishing extended in the Challis area; moose populations; electronic calls; greater Yellowstone comments; and Department slow to react in reducing cow permits.

Chairman Wheeler stated that a more in depth discussion would be covered in the wolf hunting agenda item.

### **Director's Report**

Director Groen referenced the following items found in the Director's Report in the agenda book.

- The Department is implementing in the Director's office a reorganizing structure that enhances the Department's capability to manage wildlife and better serve a broader public and recognize the traditional users
  - Virgil Moore, Deputy Director of Operations
  - Sharon Kiefer, Assistant Director - Policy

- Deputy Director of Programs to be announced
- The FY09 budget is \$76 million
- License sales are down 4% for the month of March
- Online Hunter/Bowhunter registration was launched on March 4<sup>th</sup>, to date 1200 people have registered online
- Work is continuing on streamlining the hunter education curriculum
- Communications Bureau reorganized the Big Game regulations making it easier to read for hunting in Idaho
- Dr. Karen Rudolph, Wildlife Laboratory Biologist, was honored with the Guy Bradley Award for her contributions in the protection of our wildlife resources
- Thanks to Enforcement Officer George Fischer and his involvement with connecting youth to the outdoors in Region 2
  - Partnered with Flying B Ranch to provide youth with their first hunting experience
- Eleven new conservation officers participated on the new employee tour
- Kudos to Mike Maffey, Chief, Engineering for his work
- Three regional fish managers were selected: David Teuscher, Dan Garren and Joe Dupont
- Natural Resources Policy Bureau (NRPB) provides technical services and mitigation for a number of projects
- NRPB will be reorganized, memo to follow of the new structure
- About 76 % of tags were reported at this time for the Hunter Survey Mandatory report
- Staff is doing a good job pursuing outside grants for Access Yes
- Bill Hutchinson is the Special Assistant to the Director to work on efficiencies for the Department

### **Commission Reports**

Each Commissioner provided a Regional update report.

Panhandle Region, Commissioner McDermott:

- Jim Fredericks has returned to the Panhandle Region from the Upper Snake Region
- Joe Dupont was promoted to the regional fisheries manager
- Harvest of Lake Trout and Rainbow Trout by anglers has been less than last year
- Flooding is occurring at Lightening Creek
- Three public meetings on wolves were held last week in the Panhandle Region, Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene and St. Maries with 165 people attending the three meetings
- Winter conditions were tough in the Panhandle, the Coeur d'Alene Basin was at 150% of average snow pack, making conditions difficult for wildlife
- Turkey season is off to a slow start due to the cold weather

- The Engineering Bureau is currently working with the Region on design drawings to make the Farragut Range compatible with the Court Order
- Kathy Cousins, Mitigation Biologist, is working with the Sandpoint High School science classes to monitor improvements on the Trout Creek portion of the Pend Oreille WMA
- Enforcement investigated two wolf mortalities in the Region

Salmon Region, Gary Power:

- Reported that an access site located on private property in the Salmon Region near the North Fork is no longer allowing public access
- The Forest Service is working on a project for a boat ramp to be built at the Newman Ranch, looks like it will get accomplished allowing more river access
- Region continues its efforts for Aquatic Education and Envirothon Classes
  - Important for kids in rural areas to have a hands on experience
- Two public meetings on wolves were held last week in the Salmon Region with 25 in attendance
- Excellent steelhead fishing from Stanley to Salmon up to the last day of the season
- Several wolf mortalities reported in the region
- Buffalo ridge pack of wolves was taken out
- Constituent proposed viewing areas for wolves are in conflict areas
- Hunter Education instructor Dick Headklock to receive national honor award

Southeast Region, Randy Budge:

- Reported snow fall was at normal for the Region
- Overall things are going well in the Region with good public perception
- Efforts for the Region and Headquarters to be more inclusive and be better listeners is paying off
- Changes well received in the Region regarding maintaining the 4 point area
  - Commission will look at this for the next season setting
- Town Hall meeting was held last Tuesday
- Controversy issues regarding winter feeding
- May 31 meeting will be held to discuss winter feeding and mule deer biology
  - How has the winter feeding program worked the last three years
  - How does the winter feeding advisory committee interact with the Regional Supervisor and the Department
  - And try to assess it and see if there are ways to improve the winter feeding program
- Reported that most comments he hears from constituents are about deer
  - People seem to be very satisfied
- Fisheries is doing well, but will not be a good fish opener due to all the streams with high water
- Yellowstone cutthroat run at Blackfoot Reservoir that has been decimated for a number of years due to drought and pelican predation a higher water level has

- helped for a larger number of fish going through and staff continues to work on with USFWS
- New developments continue to impact winter habitat for deer
- Several wind farm proposals on the table

Clearwater Region, Fred Trevey:

- Reports the dedication he sees in Fish and Game employees
- Several public meetings held in the region to discuss wolves
- Attended Sportsmen Breakfast in Moscow
  - Wolves
  - Depredation on Palouse
- Participates and is on the steering committee for the Clearwater Basin Collaborative
  - Concerns for resource management in the Clearwater Basin
  - Department serves as a technical advisor for the group
- Winter mortality is on going
- Reported 17, 000 lbs. of grass planted at Craig Mountain
- Attended volunteer program appreciation dinner
- Distributed a photo of 7 trophy bighorn sheep rams that were killed in last summers Chimney Complex Fire at Craig Mountain
- Fishing for salmon is slow, too much water
- Dworshak nutrient project has been a success
- Potlatch River work being done on making it a better habitat

Magic Valley Region, Wayne Wright:

- Great opportunity to work with the Magic Valley Region
- Outstanding staff and thanks for hosting the meeting
- Sage grouse lek information collected this spring shows a decline over last years count
  - Lack of access or delayed access to lek sites may have contributed to lower numbers
  - Poor production in 2007
- Mule deer fawn survival south of the Snake River did very well with 60-65 % survival
- Mule deer fawn survival was below average north of the Snake River with less than 35 % of the radio collared animals surviving to May 15
- Volunteers planted over 50,000 bitterbrush and sagebrush seedlings
- Regional staff completed a strategy to minimize the risk of interaction between bighorn sheep and domestic sheep for the South Hills
- Enforcement staff have been busy with non traditional type services: working with youth on bird identification; teaching shooting skills at the Jerome Rod and Gun Club, conservation and speaking to local hunter education classes
- Two of the new officers for the Magic Valley Region will attend POST in the next few weeks

- Fisheries has been busy with spring sampling of local reservoirs
- Access Yes enrollment is down 50 % this year, feels the Department needs to take a look at this

Southwest Region, Robert Barowsky:

- Reported since March 1 through April 22 volunteers have planted over 60,920 bitterbrush and sagebrush
- Environmental Staff Biologist continues to work with the Ada County Developments to keep zones and habitats open in these huge developments
- Paddock Reservoir access improvements are complete
- Hancock Dam, at Little Fish Lake, was partially breached to address Water Resources dam safety concerns
- Roswell Marsh is being managed to maintain vegetation in an early succession stage to facilitate its restoration as a marsh when water is available
- Idaho Power is constructing the new joint facility at C.J. Strike, which will provide a single location for the public to contact Idaho Power, the Owyhee County Sheriff, and Fish and Game by about July
- Fisheries has been down due to the long winter and ice blocking
- Staff is counting sage grouse
- Mule deer survival is down
- Unit 39 shows 100 % fawn survival
- Wolf season setting meetings were held in McCall, Nampa and Boise
- Reported OHV 110 contacts and 33 citations
  - Still a concern for the Region
- Directive Patrol was deemed a success on slowing down traffic and keeping our deer survival on HWY 21
  - ISP, Ada County Sheriff Office and the Fish and Game
  - Would like to see this effort each year

Referenced letter from Ada County Fish and Game League distributed at the March meeting regarding senior hunt proposals

- Proposal to use unsold youth permits to be youth, handicapped and senior
- Commission will address at the July meeting

Upper Snake Region, Cameron Wheeler:

- Chairman Wheeler welcomed Bonnie Butler, Governor's Office and Representative Bert Stevenson
- Referenced 2 wolves killed in the Region
- Three employees have left the Region to take other jobs outside the State where they can make up to 20% more than the Department can pay
- High fawn mortality rate this winter

## **Consent Calendar**

**08-42 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT AND THE MINUTES FOR MARCH 5-6, MARCH 13, MARCH 20, MARCH 27 AND APRIL 16, 2008. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

## **REPORT**

### **Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Report**

Gayle Valentine, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on Idaho Fish and Wildlife (IFWF) activities.

The Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation has been approached by a land owner in the Boise Foothills to give a 40 acre conservation easement. The area is adjacent an existing Foundation conservation easement. The IDFG Region 3 office reviewed the site with Tom Parker, IFWF Land Consultant, and agreed the area provides important mule deer and elk winter habitat. The easement would offer permanent protection from development and would provide a buffer to the nearby Boise River WMA. The landowner is considering the financial obligations of an easement so we are waiting on the landowner's decision to proceed.

The 18<sup>th</sup> annual online trip auction garnered over \$7,000. The proceeds will benefit IDFG efforts to get children outdoors. This year's auction involved 133 registered users and 74 bidders indicating a dramatic increase since 2007. Six people have taken their trips and complimented the Department on the work they do on behalf of Idaho's wildlife! We are already planning the February 2009 online auction.

The Foundation held their annual meeting on April 18 & 19, 2008 in Jerome at the IDFG Magic Valley office. The Foundation voted to approve the Foundation's Investment Policy. Copies are available upon request.

The next board meeting will be in Pocatello on August 14, 15 & 16, 2008 with a field trip to the four conservation easements gifted to IFWF by Wayne and Terry Taysom, a tour of one wetland mitigation project at the Edson Fichter Nature Area, and a tour of two Foundation funded projects at the Pocatello Ross Zoo.

Ms. Valentine presented a copy of the new digitized elk plate that just went on sale. The plate is now made of a lighter aluminum and will not require a large inventory due to the digitized system. The elk plate is the highest selling of the wildlife license plates with proceeds going to support habitat improvement and nongame species. The digitized bluebird and cutthroat plates will be available once the remaining inventory runs out.

## **RULES**

### **Rules: Two-Pole Permit and Terminology for Disabled Archery Permit**

Sharon Kiefer distributed a copy of Legislative Bills for 2008 that affected the Department (Appendix 41, Exhibit 50).

New laws passed during the 2008 legislative session require modification of IDAPA rules. Staff made rule recommendations to comport with 2008 legislation for the new two pole permit (House Bill 472) and creating a reference for disabled archery permit (Senate Bill 1265). The latter is a continuation of effort to replace the use of “handicapped” with “disabled” in Fish and Game statute and rule.

Correction of terminology to correctly reference the Disabled Motor Vehicle Hunting Permit in IDAPA 13.01.07.101.02.a is also recommended for consistency with previous rule-making and statute.

**08-43 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion TO MAKE MODIFICATIONS TO CHAPTER 11 AS NOTED REMOVING THE TWO POLE VALIDATION DESCRIPTION AND CHANGING VALIDATION TO PERMIT; CHAPTER 4 DELETING HANDICAPPED AND REPLACING WITH DISABLED; AND CHAPTER 7 DELETING HANDICAPPED AND REPLACING WITH DISABLED TERMINOLOGY. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

### **Disability Rule Briefing**

Ms. Kiefer stated that an error has been detected in the rule for required documentation for a disability license (Appendix 41, Exhibit 51) that has led to customer confusion and dissatisfaction.

Commission consensus is to allow self certification stating that the individual is able to hold and use legal equipment. Ms. Kiefer will prepare a rule proposal and present at the July Commission meeting for approval.

### **Rules: Wolf Hunting**

Jim Unsworth, Chief, Bureau of Wildlife, provided a report on the Wolf Harvest 2008 Management (Appendix 41, Exhibit 52). The report covered current population size, mortality limits and how they are derived, public input from the scoping sessions, and a review of the primary comments received.

Mr. Unsworth presented the Department recommendations (Appendix 41, Exhibit 53) for non biological rules for wolf hunting and wolf season options (Appendix 41, Exhibit 54)



to the Commission. Dr. Unsworth noted that he would provide the Commission with options as outlined in the plan, provide an example that was scoped with the public, and discussion to follow on where the Department needs to go with the recommendations.

**08-44 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE NON BIOLOGICAL RULES AS OUTLINED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE 2008 WOLF HUNTING SEASONS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

#### **Reported Mortality Limit**

The example provided by Dr. Unsworth to the Commission was at the 2006 mortality level (see exhibit 53). The Wolf Management Plan calls for managing wolves at a population level of between 2005-2007 levels.

**08-45 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO MANAGE WOLF POPULATIONS AT THE 2005 LEVEL AND DIRECTED THE DEPARTMENT TO ADJUST WOLF MORTALITY LIMIT TO MEET THE POPULATION MANAGEMENT GOAL. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

Chairman Wheeler stated that the State of Idaho has done everything they could to deal with this issue upfront, honestly and showed a lot of integrity. He feels this is a very conservative number and the Commission is following through on their responsibility they are given under the State statue to provide hunting and fishing opportunities for the sportsmen. There is nothing wrong with defending our hunters and protecting our ungulate herds. Chairman Wheeler supports the motion.

#### **Opening and closing dates on seasons (see exhibit 54)**

**08-46 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a MOTION TO OPEN THE WOLF SEASON IN THE BACKCOUNTRY EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup> AND ANY WEAPON OR UNIT AS OF OCTOBER 1 WOULD BE OPEN TO WOLF HUNTING ON THE FRONT RANGE WITH A CLOSING DATE OF DECEMBER 31, WITH A COMMISSION REVIEW IN NOVEMBER TO DETERMINE IF THE MORTALITY LIMITS HAVE BEEN MET AND THE OPTION TO EXTEND THE SEASON IF NECESSARY. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

Chairman Wheeler stated that the season setting for wolf is a milestone for the agency. Chairman Wheeler commends staff and fellow Commissioners for their work and efforts on the process to set a season to hunt wolves.

Director Groen stated that history has been made today in adopting the first hunting season for the gray wolf. Director Groen noted that the Department will manage wolves at least 5 times above the government recovery threshold; wolves are very precisely and

tightly managed. There are 12 DAU's and 120 wolves collared. For this species the Department is looking at total mortality with strict reporting. The Department manages 12 big game species and as managers we need to get the balance on how they relate. If the Department is not allowed to manage there will be more injury and harm to other species, users, and to the economy. Director Groen stated that we must manage these species, as they are well over recovery.

Randy Budge noted that the Commission had not addressed specifically the suggestion or proposal that there should be a corridor or viewing area. It would be appropriate for the record to have a comment showing what the Commission thoughts are on this. The Department already has substantial viewing areas anywhere in the State of Idaho and during the non hunting season (Jan 1 – Sept 15) there will be exclusive viewing opportunity. The bulk of the year is exclusive viewing for anyone who wants to view wolves or any other wildlife in the State.

Sharon Kiefer noted that there was an error in the wording for the non biological rules for wolves that was not in the final draft that was presented to the Commission for the rule that precludes possession of raw wolf hides except during the season and 10 days after. That rule bleeds over into legitimate business of fur buyers and taxidermists who do possess raw wolf hides throughout the year and hides that are imported from Canada are not marked with a pelt tag.

**08-47 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion directing staff TO CORRECT THE PROPOSAL FOR NON BIOLOGICAL WOLF RULES REGARDING POSSESSION OF RAW WOLF HIDES. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

## **REPORT**

### **Department of Corrections Presentation**

Commissioner Wright introduced Robin Sandy, Chairman of the Board, Corrections. Chair Sandy introduced Pamela Sonnen, Chief, Corrections and Lt. Noel Barlow who provided a report on the Idaho Department of Correction Vocation Work Projects Program. This program provides work crews to any local, state, or federal government agency.

### **Update on Anadromous Fish**

Ed Schreiver, Chief, Fisheries provided an update on the Chinook salmon run to the Commission (Appendix 41, Exhibit 55). Mr. Schreiver noted that the decision to allow a free jack limit in addition to the adult limit was a good opportunity move. The jack count is high this year and is providing significant harvest opportunity.

## **RULES**

### **Rules: South Fork Salmon River and Upper Salmon River Chinook Fisheries Seasons**

Ed Schreiber, Chief, Fisheries, presented the 2008 Fishery proposal for spring Chinook on the upper Salmon River and summer Chinook in the south fork Salmon River (Appendix 41, Exhibit 56). Mr. Schreiber noted that this is the first time in 30 years that the upper Salmon River has had a Chinook season.

**08-48 Commissioner Budge moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE 2008 FISHERY PROPOSALS FOR SPRING CHINOOK ON THE UPPER SALMON RIVER AND SUMMER CHINOOK IN THE SOUTH FORK SALMON RIVER AS PRESENTED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

## **LANDS**

### **Harris Land Acquisition**

Chairman Wheeler excused himself from the discussion and vote on this item as he represents the seller.

Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator, presented the Harris Land Acquisition proposal to the Commission. Mr. Servheen stated that the Emma Louise Harris Estate consists of 140 acres adjacent to Tex Creek WMA in Bonneville County. The land exists in two parcels on the Harris Bench; one 50 acre piece and one 90 acre piece. Both parcels abut state (IDL) property. In addition, the southwest corner of the 90 acre piece is contiguous to land managed as part of Tex Ck WMA. Both parcels primarily consist of CRP and if purchased would provide approximately \$5,000.00 annually to the Tex Creek budget for habitat operations and maintenance at least through the life of the existing contract (through 2020 on the 90 acres and through 2014 on the 50 acre parcel both at \$43/acre---total potential income of \$55,057). Executive Session Jan 2008. Costs: \$98,000 in license monies. PILT is estimated at \$85/year. O & M costs estimated at \$1000/year.

**08-49 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE HARRIS LAND ACQUISITION. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

### **Land Legacy Project Update**

Mr. Servheen provided a summary on the Land Legacy Project. Mr. Servheen noted that the Land Legacy Project has three main pieces:

- The Trust and its establishment and management

- The Settlement with Bonneville Power for wildlife mitigation
- Sales of properties

The Department would like to partnership with Trust for Public Lands and will meet on May 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss setting up a trust. The Department would bring back a proposal to the Commission for their review.

## **REPORT**

### **Sage Grouse Update**

Jeff Gould, Wildlife Game Manager, provided a sage grouse update to the Commission (Appendix 41, Exhibit 57).

Mr. Gould stated that greater sage-grouse occupy about half of their historic range and their population was estimated at 100,000-500,000 grouse rangewide in 2004. Recent surveys indicate the reproductive and survival rates are down from previous years in portions of Idaho while other areas remain stable. This is also the case across their range, and biologists are pooling survey information in an attempt to discern a rangewide trend. Meanwhile, land managers recognize wildfire as one of the greatest threats to sagebrush communities and work together to develop rehabilitation projects that expedite habitat recovery which can span decades. Last year, BLM estimated that nearly 750,000 acres of sagebrush was impacted by fire in Idaho. Approximately 400,000 acres was considered key sage-grouse habitat and more than 300,000 acres was treated through rehabilitation projects. This is one example of an important conservation measure taken to sustain sage-grouse in Idaho.

The federal government is under U.S. District Judge Lynn Winmill's order to reconsider an earlier decision (January 2005) against listing sage-grouse under the federal endangered species act as threatened or endangered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has until December to issue a new decision. The prospect of listing sage-grouse has far-reaching impacts on grazing, energy development (oil, gas, and wind), mining, and other activities within sagebrush habitat throughout 11 western states.

In response to a pending decision to list Greater sage-grouse under the Federal Endangered Species Act, Idaho is working with 10 other states to compile the most current information on this game bird. This includes population data such as lek count data as well as information on recent habitat changes and conservation actions. This information is due to the USFWS in late June and Idaho's input will be coordinated with other state and federal agencies as well as sage-grouse local working groups. The USFWS plans to issue a ruling on listing sage-grouse by December 2008.

## **FISCAL**

### **Budget FY08, FY09 and FY10**

Jim Lau, Chief, Administration, stated that the Department's cash position is down over the last couple of months. License sales are down by 4% compared to last year. Mr. Lau does not feel the Department will have to draw down any cash reserves for FY08 as we draw to a close for the year. Mr. Lau noted that the Department may need to draw down some of the cash reserves to cover Change in Employee Compensation (CEC) for FY09.

The FY 2010 budget will be much like the FY 2009 budget with no enhancements. Staff will present the FY2010 budget to the Commission for approval at the July meeting. Mr. Lau noted that September 1 is the due date for the budget to be sent to Division of Financial Management. The Department has identified major initiatives for the FY10 budget that they would like to accomplish and are working on a match for the revenue side. The Department plans to pursue a 15-20% fee increase as well as alternative sources of revenue.

Items the Department would like to address for revenue enhancement are:

- Youth Fishing and Hunting
- Access Yes
- Fishing Ponds
- Mule Deer Initiative
- Shooting ranges
- Deferred maintenance

Director Groen stated that Department is looking at several categories of services and feels sportsmen license dollars should go to sportsmen activities. The Department has 90% of species that are not hunted or fished. The Department is looking at wildlife grant money that would benefit the whole community. The Department will look at agriculture services; there has been more depredation claims than in previous years. Other initiatives of interest are public access, responsible OHV use and conservation technical services which goes beyond our traditional services. Natural resource agencies are getting stretched way beyond providing hunting, in to how we protect, preserve, and perpetuate wildlife. How does the Department make itself relevant to meet these challenges? The Department will bring initiatives to the Commission at their July meeting.

## **REPORT**

### **Bighorn Sheep Update**

Jim Unsworth, Chief, Bureau of Wildlife, presented a report to the Commission (Appendix 41, Exhibit 58). The report covered history, declines and restoration for the bighorn sheep. Mr. Unsworth noted that bighorn sheep was the most abundant big game animal in Idaho in 1840. Today we have 2,200 Rocky Mountain bighorns, down from nearly 4,000 in 1990 and roughly, 1,500 California bighorns which is up from nearly

1,300 in 1990. Demand for bighorn sheep tags is high and is a once in a life time opportunity and is the most sought after trophy in North America.

A statewide Bighorn Sheep Management Plan was developed with public input in 1980, with the plan being revised in 1985 and 1990. The Department has initiated a new planning process lead by Holli Miyasaki and Dale Toweill. The Department will have a draft plan for the Commission to review at the November Commission meeting and a final draft in January 2009 to the Commission and go out for public review with the final draft plan completed March 2009.

Dr. Unsworth noted that the Interim Plan adopted by the Commission in February 2008 purpose was to get the Department through this spring grazing season for domestic sheep. The goal of this plan is separation and the reality is to reduce risk in some cases. Staff worked on 5 individual herd plans. The Department will continue to work with the Governor's Task Force on Domestic/Bighorn sheep interactions.

### **Hunter Surveys/Predator Control**

Brad Compton, State Big Game Manager, provided a report on deer and elk surveys and the process (Appendix 41, Exhibit 59). The Department uses a number of techniques to monitor the status of deer and elk populations. Aerial surveys, primarily using helicopters, currently provide the foundation for deer and elk population monitoring in Idaho.

Both the cost of aircraft rentals and availability of suitable aircraft and pilots continue to be a challenge for maintaining aerial-based population monitoring and predator management activities.

Mr. Compton distributed a 2007-2008 Mule Deer Winter Survival fact sheet (Appendix 41, Exhibit 60).

### **Predator Control Program**

Todd Grimm, District Supervisor, APHIS provided a report on predator control (appendix 41, Exhibit 61). Mr. Grimm stated that in 2008 Wildlife Services began its third straight year of coyote control efforts to protect mule deer from coyote predation in IDFG Units 66A, 69 and 76. During the first four month of the year, WS has removed 273 coyotes.

Predator management activities conducted by Wildlife Services also relies heavily on the use of aircraft, both helicopter and fixed-wing.

Mr. Grimm noted that the government does not consider para gliders a safe aircraft and will not allow WS to use in predator control.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Executive Session**

**08-50 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345 1(C) TO DISCUSS LAND ACQUISITIONS, (B) PERSONNEL AND (F) LEGAL. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

**08-51 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.**

The session ended at 6:10 with no official action taken.

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Wayne Wright  
Acting Chairman

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Cal Groen  
Secretary